



Pls. Montserrat Rifà-Valls  
and Marta Bertran

Research team: Ingrid Agud,  
Joanna Empain, Mireia  
Foradada, Anna Majó, Jordi  
Pamies, Angelina Sánchez.

Work team: Alejandro Caravaca,  
Constanza Chamorro, Roser  
Girós, Fatiha el Mouhali, Berta  
Llos, Laura N. Pérez, Maribel  
Ponferrada, Sara López

"Mirage of the privilege" - 2018

Children's agencies, vulnerability and education:  
Creating transmedia narratives for inclusion

# AGEncias



REF. PID2021-125108OB-I00 (2022-2025)  
Proyectos de generación de conocimiento.

**atlas**  
interseccions crítiques  
en educació

**UAB**  
Universitat Autònoma  
de Barcelona



# Goals AGEncias

## *General*

**To explore the diversity of children's agencies for the creation of inclusive transmedia narratives**

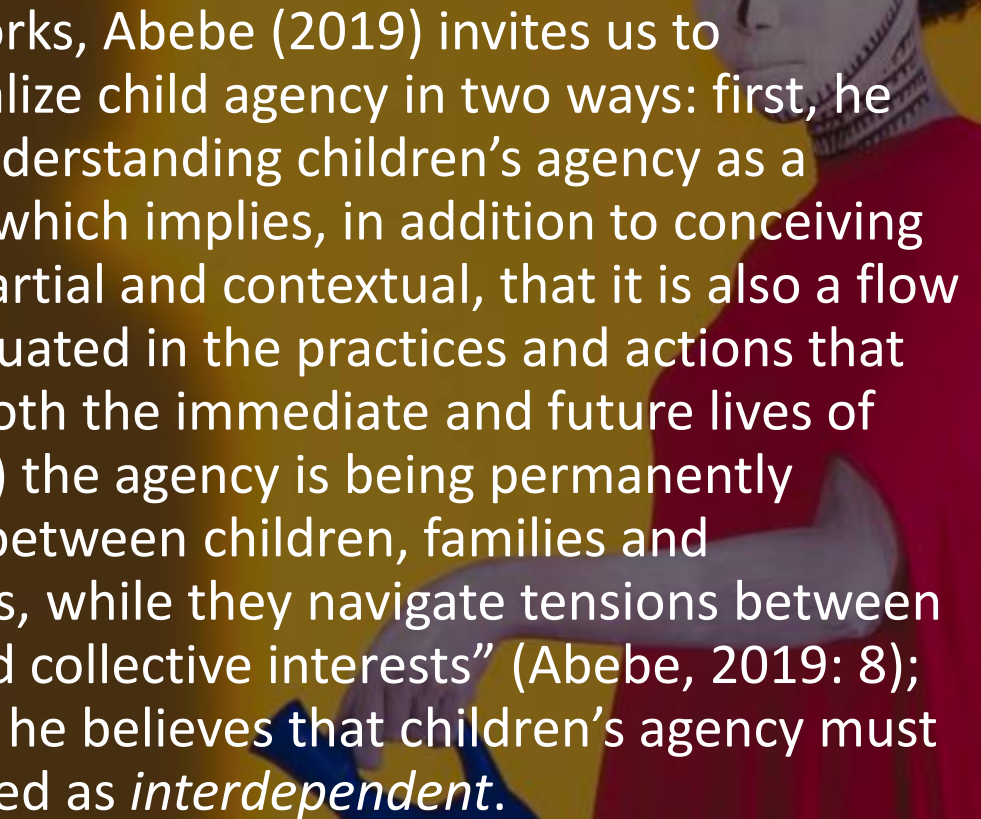
## *Specifics*

1. To study the memories, vulnerabilities, belongings and life projects in the diversity of child agencies.
2. To interpret the affects, learning and bonds of childhood (among peers and with adults) in regulated and unregulated socio-educational spaces.
3. To analyze inclusion through children's agencies and their empowerment strategies that challenge discrimination and exclusion.
4. To promote creativity in childhood stories, with multiple media, for an inclusive education.

# Children's Agency



In recent works, Abebe (2019) invites us to reconceptualize child agency in two ways: first, he proposes understanding children's agency as a *continuum*, which implies, in addition to conceiving agency as partial and contextual, that it is also a flow that "it is situated in the practices and actions that transform both the immediate and future lives of children. (...) the agency is being permanently negotiated between children, families and communities, while they navigate tensions between personal and collective interests" (Abebe, 2019: 8); and second, he believes that children's agency must be interpreted as *interdependent*.



# State of the art: mapping research on children's agency

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Archaeology and history of the agencies for children (Sterelny, 2021; Harin *et al.*, 2019);

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Formation of child agency: protection and (foster) care (Saglietti y Zucchermaglio, 2021), children political negotiation (Ciordia, 2021) and embodying normativity (Vasil y Tomaselli, 2022).

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Children' agency and diversity: vulnerability and resilience in places of refuge or mobility experiences (Revis 2019; Wales, Mårtesson y Jansson, 2021).

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Children's agency and education: prevention of abuse and maltreatment (Lansdown, 2020), language learning (Fogle y King, 2013) and social interaction in the classroom (Houen *et al.*, 2016; Kirbi, 2020).

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Contexts of agency: spaces of agency (Veronese *et al.*, 2020), play and family ties (Matthews y Rix, 2013), among others.



## Migrations, inequalities & poverty

- Migrant children*: binary symbolic/linguistic analysis (victim and criminal) (Thomson et al. 2019)
- Subalternity agency*: paternalism & traditionalists agency (African contexts) vs. “less paternalism” & individualism agency (Western contexts) (Thsabangu, 2017; Merkiti, 1984).
- Children vulnerability* shows self-care strategies.

## Social services

- Critical epistemologies* against adultcentric view (Ciordia, 2021; Konstatoni & Emejulu, 2016).
- Institution of (foster)care*: children rights and agency suppression(?)
- Racialized working-class families*: overrepresented in the system (Clark et al. 2011).
- Consequences on youth*: LGBTQ+ homelessness, Girls’ prostitution, Unseen gender-related violence (Grooms, 2020; Lansdown, 2020).

**Inclusive education in socio-educational contexts**

- *Children show more agency* the less adult presence there is in educational spaces (Gurdal & Surbring, 2018; Houen et al, 2016).
- Implications for research:* “I wonder if” instead of “I would like”.
- More agency* in families than schools or other educational institutions (Saglietti & Zucchermaglio, 2021).
- Age:* Hierarchy of power (Laursen & Bukowski, 1997 in Gurdal & Sorbring 2018:4); gender as well.

- Going beyond civil rights and participation:* avoiding available subjectivities vs. children's creative power to spread agency (Kirby, 2020).
- *Vulnerability as a human quality:* distinction between ‘thinner agency’ & ‘thicken agency’ (Sánchez Caro, 2019; Klocker, 2007).
- *Socio-educational contexts shape, allow and/or limit agency:* potential/limitation (Kirby, 2020).

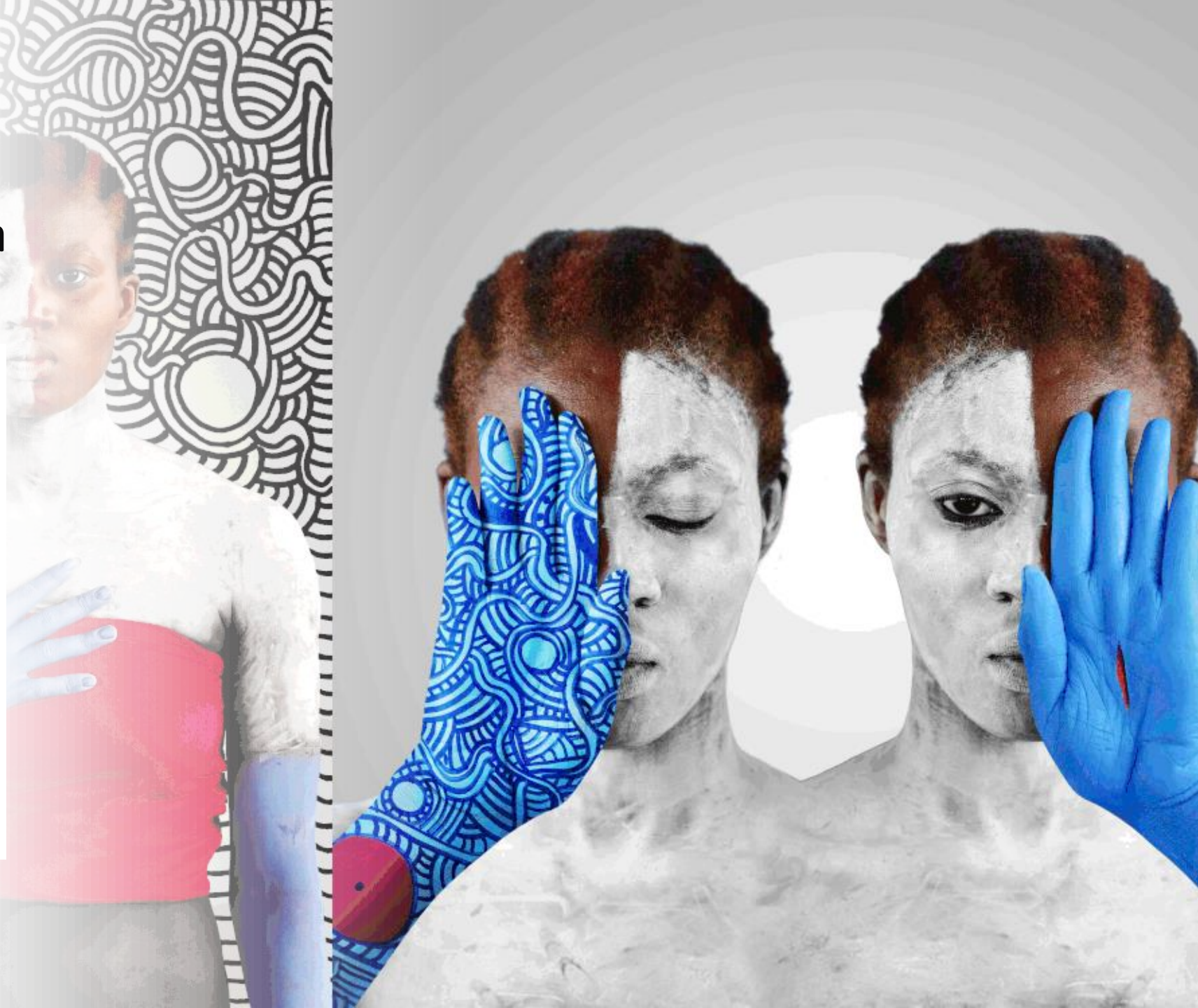
**Maternity, transnational families & spaces of game**



"An Idle Mind" - 2014

## Digital culture, mass media and globalisation

- *Tech&digital culture* focus primarily on self-efficacy, participation, and competences. No agency references.
- *Hybrid-transitions*: spaces between digital and non-digital relationships/resources; building knowledge and new narratives (Scollan&Farini, 2020).
- *Key elements for research*: interaction, game, and active role (social capital bonds!).
- *Adult*: limitation.



# The needed linkage between intersectionality and agency



## Critical contributions to deepen the analysis of the agency

1. Anticategorical position of children (risk of victimisation and homogenising the category of child; gender, social class and race/ethnicity, geography matter).
2. Agency is a human condition (There is no context of agency suppression).
3. Also vulnerability and interdependence.
4. Governability in childhood and beyond: the creative power of children to extend agency (Kirby, 2020)
5. To understand how children produce their agency according to their experience and positionality by deconstructing the adult-centred position educators researchers and adults.



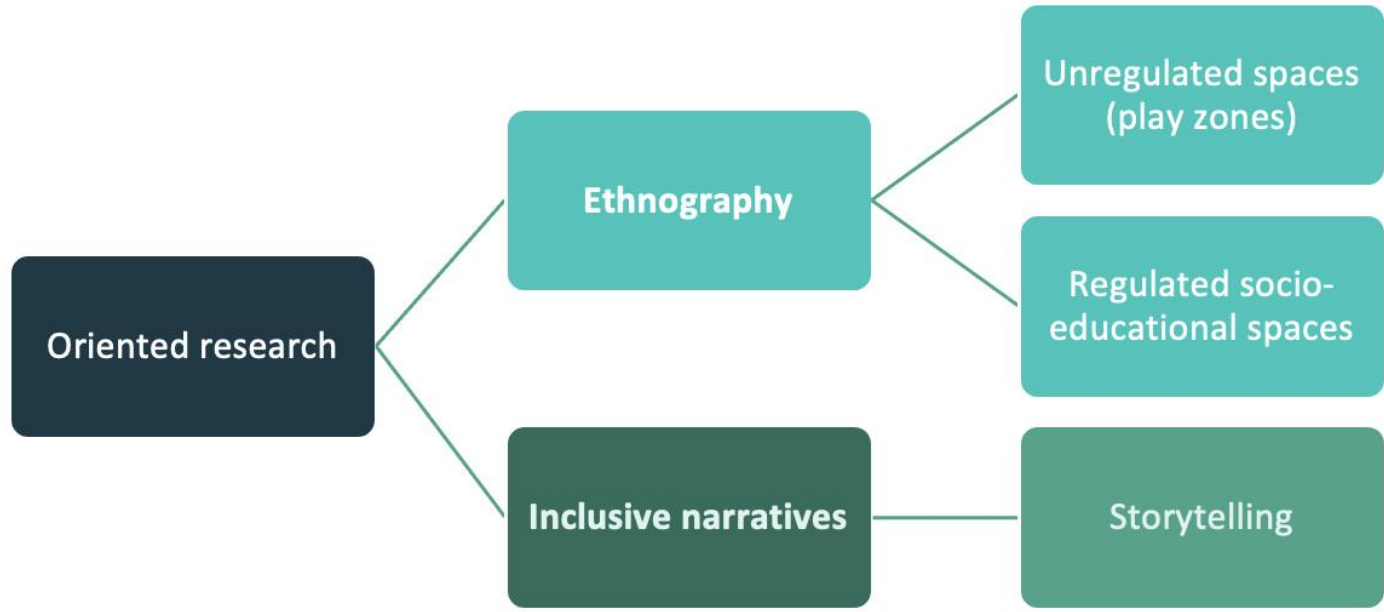
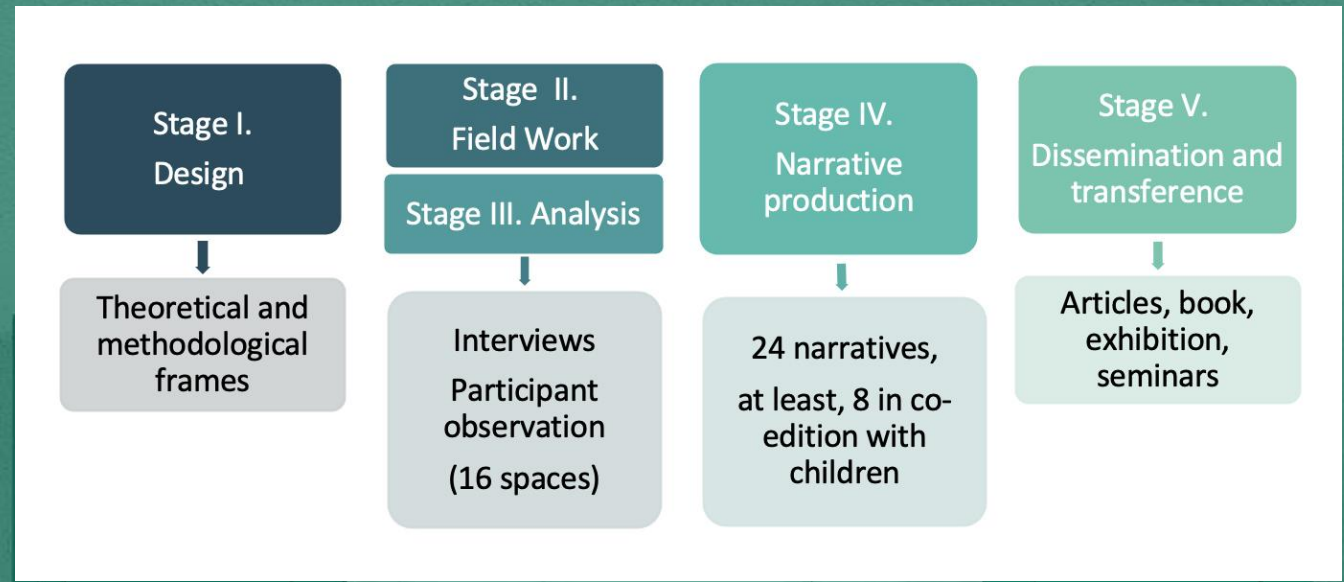


## Ethnography and children

Ethnography is an optimal method for studying children and researching with children (Lancy, Corsaro, or Christensen; Warming, 2011; Waller & Bitou, 2011). Eder and Corsaro (1999) consider that ethnography brings benefits as long as it is sustained and committed, microscopic and holistic, flexible and self-correcting, allowing problems of power and privilege, as well as the roles acquired and exercised, to be rectified. Others, however, have made critical analysis of the limitations of giving children a voice (Komulainen, 2007; Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008; Warming, 2011).

"The other woman" - 2017

# Methodological design





## Main challenges

- ❖ The uniqueness of ethnographic research focusing on children's agencies
- ❖ Understanding the agencies from a polyhedral model, based on affects and dialogism
- ❖ The deployment of an intersectional gaze in participant observation
- ❖ Participation in ethnography from a non-adult-centric feminist position
- ❖ Differences in the observation of regulated and unregulated socio-educational spaces
- ❖ Developing a diffractive ethnography against the approach of reflexivity.
- ❖ Selecting vulnerable and bordering zones in four Catalan cities.

“Memories Of Development” - 2017



## INTERSECTIONS

- AGE
- SOCIAL CLASS
- 
- GENDER
- RACIALIZATION

- LLEIDA
- ETHNICITY

- SANTA COLOMA
- STUDIES (level)

- BARCELONA
- BODY

- TERRASSA
- SPACE-TIME



# LLEIDA

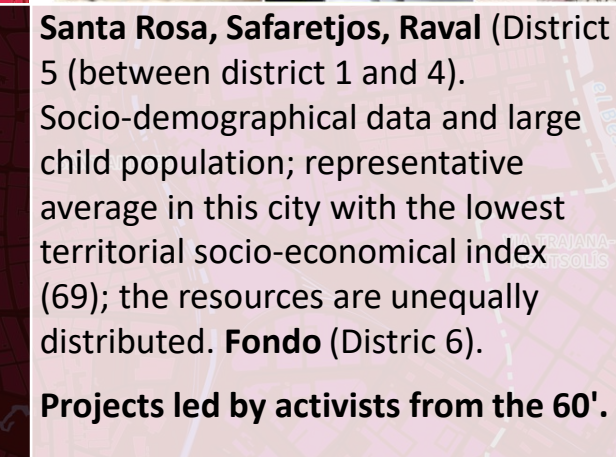
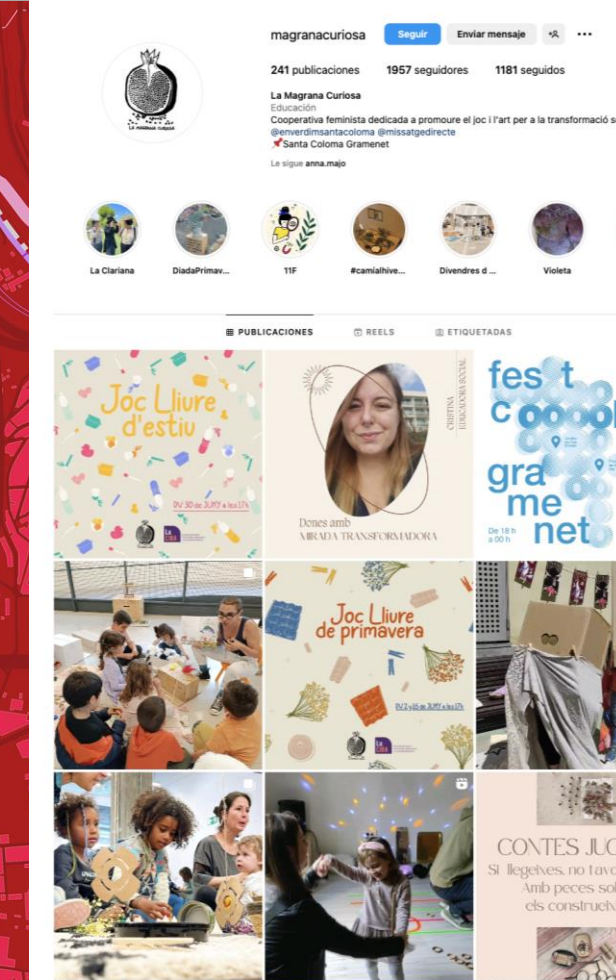
**El Secà de Sant Pere.** Impoverished, children's population and vulnerability in families have increased, low-income groups. Migration: national, and from central and North Africa. Plural agencies.

**Joc de la Bola.** Bordering zone with a liminal street: multicultural quarters, and peripheral, low and middle-class population, ethnic diversity. Presence of adolescent mothers

Parks and extra-schooling activities (homogeneous and heterogeneous)

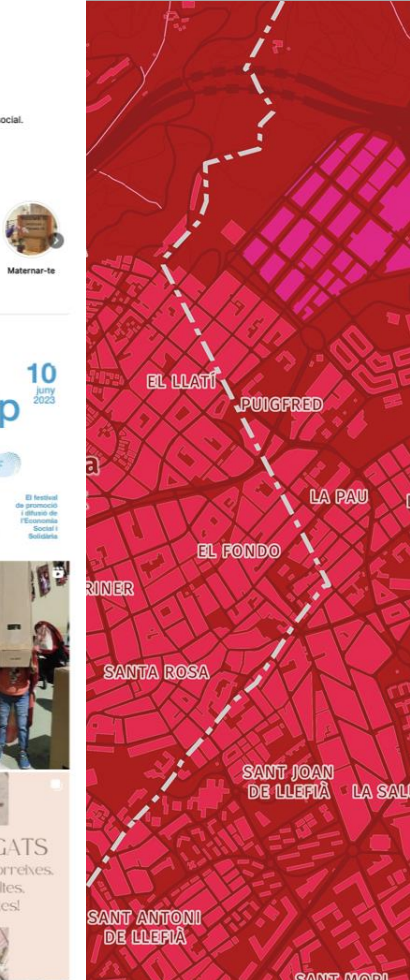


# SANTA COLOMA



**Santa Rosa, Safaretjos, Raval** (District 5 (between district 1 and 4). Socio-demographical data and large child population; representative average in this city with the lowest territorial socio-economical index (69); the resources are unequally distributed. **Fondo** (Distric 6).

**Projects led by activists from the 60'.**



Magnet school, river spaces... Network of mediators, library-market.

*La Magrana curiosa* a family feminist space to promote play and art for social transformation.

*La periférica.*

## BARCELONA

**Poble Sec.** Avoiding the most explored quarters, dual district in terms of social class, racial mixtivity and multilingualism. Masculinization, kids' socialization (conflicted and civilized) and family spaces, high density. Muslim families' presence. **Zona Nord, Ciutat Meridiana:** segregated, centre-periphery, index of vulnerability (two different cities sharing spaces) **Baix Guinardó.** A hinge quarter, between Navas and Gràcia. A sociological analysis of the extra-schooling activities in this city determines 7 types.

Football stadiums and schools  
Sports in the street (rugby, skating, cricket, hockey)  
Granted activities  
Dressing rooms (health, bullying).  
LGBTQ+ spaces



**Vallparadis Park** from North to South, a large green bordering park, a historical creek renewed, 3,5 km. Quarters: Guadalhorce, Can Palet, Segle XX... Exhaustive data from the city council complemented with popular sources (living here, rentals, etc.). Climate emergency in the city. **District 6. Egara, Sant Pere.** Limits with Matadepera and the industrial area, rural tracks, housing state with interior playgrounds, and single-family houses. Educational equipments in a deficient urban planning. Strategies of middle class families to select innovative schooling, high complexity schools, "esplais" and social services.

Open-air spaces and activities (360°). Leisure zones: playgrounds, swimming pool, library, garden of perceptions. One school settled in provisional containers; local and social entities. *La Fàbrica space*, an open-day centre. Neighbourhood activism.

## TERRASSA





"Clarity" - 2019

## Guidelines for the observation

### 1. Description of the space

- Materialities (objects, places, bodies)
- Maps and itineraries
- How do the children inhabit the space?
- Mobilities and uses
- Liminality and borders

### 2.1. Agencies

- Children's scripts
- Life projects
- Memories and stories (everyday life)
- The experience of being a child
- Inventiveness
- Gubernamentality of childhood
- How do they experiment inclusion?

### 2.2. Relationality of agency

- Children's dynamics
- Interactions (in-stability)
- Group actions
- Relational (dis)continuities between spaces
- Gender and social capital
- Exposition to violences (racism)



### 2.3. Children and the adult power

- Ways of participation (being)
- Abandoned spaces by adults
- How do the children reappropriate/rewrite the stories/history?
- Agency of community/community agency

### 3. About the construction of stories

- Conversations
- What makes you feel included in a space or in a group?
- Multiple languages (literacies)

## Diffractions

1. Researchers' emotionalities, places, mobilities, rituals, interruptions...
2. Researchers' agencies and relationalities, interactions with children; feeling included and excluded; power relations between researchers and other adults
3. Researchers as ethnographers and storyteller.





Thank you!

Images: Aïda Muluneh  
<https://www.aidamuluneh.com/>